

volunteer force come from all walks of life and from every corner of our Nation. In my home State, thousands have come forward to serve while thousands more have come to Washington State to train and make their home at our major military installations. These servicemembers have done everything we have asked of them and more.

While it appears that yesterday's raid came without American casualties, that, of course, has not been the case for so many missions in our fight against terrorism. Since 9/11, nearly 6,000 servicemembers have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, and more than 40,000 have been wounded. For many of our servicemembers, the scars of their service are visible and for others they are invisible. Many have lost those closest to them on the battlefield and have come home with a burden that few others know. Others will need a lifetime of care from the Department of Defense and the VA. All have left families behind, who love and miss them, to protect our country. We cannot forget these families and the fact they have sacrificed right by our servicemembers' side. Moving from base to base, giving up jobs, putting their loved ones and their country before their own needs is a gift we must repay.

As the chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, it is my job to ensure that the lifetime of care that these servicemembers and their caregivers need will be delivered.

So, today, as we appropriately take pride in the most significant victory yet in our fight against al-Qaida and terrorism, we should also take pause to honor all of the veterans and Active-Duty servicemembers who have paved the way to this day. We must also remember that this tremendous victory has come with a tremendous cost, a cost that we must bear as a nation for many years to come as our servicemembers return home.

Mr. President, this is, of course, also a particularly meaningful day for the thousands of Americans who lost a family member or a friend or a loved one on September 11. We know this news can't bring back their loved ones, but our hope is that it can help ease the pain they live with each day.

Like many Americans, my first thought last night after this news was of the victims and their families, and my thoughts and prayers remain with them during this time.

Going forward we must remain vigilant and focused on the protection of the American people from terrorism wherever it may be, and we must continue to work in the interest of peace and security for all Americans.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate the men and women of our military for a courageous mission, and our intelligence community for accurate and important intelligence.

I would like to congratulate the President for his persistence in bringing a mass murderer to justice, and I would especially like to salute the men and women of our military services who, for the last 10 years, have fought the indispensable consequences of the actions of terrorism.

All of us, as has been said by many Senators today, especially have in our hearts and minds the families of the victims of 9/11 and hope that somehow, in some small way, this event helps bring some closure to what has happened to their lives.

EASTERN TENNESSEE DISASTERS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I have just returned from visiting east Tennessee where there were devastating tornadoes last week. The President, at the request of our entire congressional delegation, has declared four of our counties—Washington, Greene, Hamilton, and Bradley—as disaster areas, and we thank him for his prompt attention to that.

I visited today northern Hamilton County, just north of Chattanooga, north of where the new Volkswagen plant will be located. In Tennessee last week 36 men and women lost their lives as a result of these storms. The area I visited is one of the two areas most affected, the other being Washington and Greene Counties, where our Governor was today.

Someone asked me following my visit if anything about it shocked me. I said: It always shocks me when I see the consequences of a devastating flood or especially a massive tornado. This one had winds of nearly 200 miles an hour. Wherever you stand, you try to put yourself in the shoes of someone who might have been there when the tornado came through and try to imagine what it would be like. You see this funnel coming and know it will only interfere with your life for about 20 or 30 seconds; but after that, it will all be devastation. There is no way you cannot be shocked by it, and there is no way I can put myself in the shoes of those who were there.

I saw one man who was there, Arthur Bates, 70 years old, and I saw his house which was completely demolished. His upright piano was upside-down. He told me he had killed a calf and left to take some meat to the preacher. He had been gone for about 5 minutes when the tornado hit his house.

Not so lucky was another family not very far away. All of the members of that family were killed except for an 8-year-old boy who was found in a tree and survived.

Not far away, several families had signs that said: The Lord was with us. Surely, it had to seem to them providential that there could be such devastation almost in their front yards and yet their homes would be safe.

Ironically, today, as I went from Nashville to Chattanooga, I was reading about a commemoration of the

floods that hit Tennessee almost exactly 1 year ago—on May 2, 2010. These were floods that affected counties from Nashville to Memphis. In Nashville alone there was \$2 billion worth of damage. People are still recovering from that flood a year later. Businesses have closed in some cases, but most have opened. The Grand Ole Opry was shut, but it was opened again. The Opryland Hotel is open again.

Nashville is thriving again, and people are coming back to Nashville. But the commemoration today was for the large number of families in Tennessee who are hurting and some who are still in recovery.

Then, if that weren't enough, in the western part of our State, along the Mississippi River, we have reports that the water is rising and will rise to levels that will be higher than at any time since the flood of 1937. People are already preparing shelters. Tributaries of the Mississippi are already rising.

On Friday I will be going to Memphis to meet with the Army Corps of Engineers and local officials to make sure we are doing all we can. None of us in the Federal Government believe we can make anyone whole after a disaster like this, but we can help. As I said to those I saw today in Chattanooga, north of Chattanooga, there is a telephone number to call—2-1-1—which is a local number for help. There is a FEMA number to call—1-800-621-FEMA (3362). We found in the flooding of a year ago from Nashville to Memphis that was a big help to many Tennesseans. I hope the same will be true in east Tennessee and across our State today.

A year ago Tennesseans distinguished themselves by not looting and complaining, but by cleaning up and helping one another. I saw that again today in Hamilton County. The sheriff told me within a few hours after the devastation there were 500 or so men with chainsaws out clearing debris and trees from the roads and from the yards helping one another.

So, Mr. President, I speak today on behalf of all Members of the Senate in expressing to those in Tennessee our concern and our willingness to continue to do all we can to help.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD following these remarks a summary of the actions that we are taking in the events that are happening in Tennessee, as well as a letter from the congressional delegation to the President requesting disaster relief, which he granted promptly, and another to the general who was president of the Mississippi River Commission urging him to take every action possible to help the communities along the Mississippi River as water rises there.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, April 30, 2011.

THE PRESIDENT,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: On behalf of the State of Tennessee, we respectfully request that you declare a federal disaster in Bradley, Greene, Hamilton, and Washington counties as a result of the severe storms, flash flooding and tornadoes that struck the state beginning on April 25, 2011.

Governor Bill Haslam has requested federal disaster assistance to respond to the devastation caused throughout Tennessee due to this historic tornado outbreak, and we expect a separate request will be forthcoming to respond to the flooding along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Flooding in many of our communities will only get worse in the coming days, and the unprecedented river stages are threatening the entire levee system.

State and local officials are only beginning to be able to assess the level of damage to infrastructure, private property and our economy. Many of the communities affected by these storms and rising flood waters are the same areas devastated by the May 2010 floods. In addition to all of the homes and businesses destroyed by the tornadoes, the flooding along the Mississippi River is forecast to exceed the great flood of 1937 in some areas, and reach the third highest level on record in Memphis by May 10.

Federal assistance is critical to help our state and local governments initiate recovery efforts and to start repairing infrastructure. Like so many areas throughout the Southeast ravaged by these storms, our communities are overwhelmed by the destruction and need federal assistance. Public and Individual Assistance in Bradley, Greene, Hamilton, and Washington counties will help communities with debris removal and make victims eligible for a number of vital disaster assistance programs. The Tennessee delegation and state and local officials stand ready to work together with federal officials to make sure that Tennesseans receive the help they need to get back on their feet.

Thank you for your expedited consideration of our State's request, and we will provide you with more information about our State's needs as information is available.

Sincerely,

LAMAR ALEXANDER,
U.S. Senator.
BOB CORKER,
U.S. Senator.
STEVE COHEN,
Congressman.
MARSHA BLACKBURN,
Congressman.
JIM COOPER,
Congressman.
CHUCK FLEISCHMANN,
Congressman.
STEPHEN L. FINCHER,
Congressman.
DIANE BLACK,
Congressman.
SCOTT DESJARLAIS,
Congressman.
JOHN J. DUNCAN, Jr.,
Congressman.
PHIL ROE,
Congressman.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, April 27, 2011.

Maj. Gen. MICHAEL J. WALSH,
President, Mississippi River Commission, Vicksburg, MS.

DEAR MAJOR GENERAL WALSH: We urgently request you take every action possible to protect communities in Tennessee and throughout the Mississippi River Valley

from rising floodwaters. The State of Tennessee has already declared a State of Emergency, and if necessary, we implore you to take preventative action rather than wait until it is too late to act.

The rising flood waters in the Mississippi River are historical in context, threatening approximately 110 miles of Tennessee riverbank. If the Mississippi River overtops or breaches the levees along Tennessee's river banks, thousands of people and acres of farmland are at tremendous risk of flooding.

We understand the Governor of Missouri, Jay Nixon, is seeking a temporary restraining order in the U.S. District Court to prevent the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from artificially crevassing the levee at Birds Point and using the Birds Point-New Madrid Floodway.

While we understand that you are facing an extremely difficult decision, we are concerned about the potential devastation that could be felt by nearly 160,000 Tennesseans. It is our understanding that the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals in the case of *Story v. Marsh*, 732 F.2d 1375, 1383 (8th Cir. 1984), regarding the operation of the Birds Point-New Madrid floodway, stated that the operation of the floodway is within the discretion of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We hope that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will move forward with crevassing the levee, if such a decision becomes necessary.

It is our sincere hope that there will not be a need to artificially crevasse the Birds Point levee, but we urge you not to delay and to take appropriate actions to protect the people and property of Tennesseans that live along the Mississippi River, as well as those throughout the Mississippi Valley.

Sincerely,

SENATOR LAMAR
ALEXANDER.
SENATOR BOB CORKER.
CONGRESSMAN STEPHEN L.
FINCHER.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF ROY BALE DALTON, JR., TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

NOMINATION OF KEVIN HUNTER SHARP TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Roy Bale Dalton, Jr., of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida, and Kevin Hunter Sharp, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Tennessee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 1 hour of debate, equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as we return from Easter recess, judicial vacancies around the country remain at historically alarming levels, as they have for the last 3 years. With 1 out of every 9 Federal judgeships still vacant, and judicial vacancies around the country remaining at 95, we have serious work to do.

I thank the majority leader for scheduling votes on two more nominations to fill judicial emergency vacancies. Roy Bale Dalton, Jr., has been nominated to fill a judgeship in the Middle District of Florida and Kevin Hunter Sharp has been nominated to fill a judgeship in the Middle District of Tennessee. Each nomination was reported unanimously by the Judiciary Committee more than a month ago. They both could be confirmed unanimously.

With cooperation from both sides of the aisle, the Senate could consider the additional 13 judicial nominees ready for final Senate action. I had hoped that the Senate would have considered a number of them before taking its Easter recess 2 weeks ago. Among those nominees are another five to fill additional judicial emergency vacancies, three of them reported by the Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support, including one which was reported unanimously but remains stalled on the calendar awaiting final action.

We should certainly have proceeded with the judicial nominees for whom there is no opposition and no reason for delay. That would have allowed us to confirm another seven nominees. They have all been thoroughly reviewed by the members of the Judiciary Committee in a hearing and have all been recommended to the Senate unanimously. They are Arenda L. Wright Allen to fill a vacancy in the Eastern District of Virginia; Michael Francis Urbanski, to fill a vacancy in the Western District of Virginia; Clair C. Cecchi to fill a vacancy in New Jersey; Esther Salas to fill another vacancy in New Jersey; Paul Oetken and Paul Engelmayer to fill vacancies in the Southern District of New York; and Ramona Manglona to fill a vacancy in the Mariana Islands. The Virginia nominees have been waiting for final consideration longer than those nominees who are being allowed to be considered today.

Two of the nominees currently awaiting a Senate vote have twice been considered by the Judiciary Committee and have twice been reported with